

# **The Early Development and Pilot Testing Of A Case Management Intervention with Victims of Stalking: An Evaluation Study**

**Emily Spence-Diehl, M.S.W., Ph.D.**  
**Florida International University**

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## **Statement of the Research Problem**

In recent years, stalking has come to be recognized as a serious and prevalent social problem (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). Various definitions of stalking have been employed in the development of research and legislation. Legally, it is most commonly defined as the “willful, malicious and repeated following or harassment of another person,” (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998, p. 1). Victims of stalking report numerous physical, social and psychological impacts that are oppressive and life changing (Hall, 1997; Kamphuis & Emmelkamp, 2001; Littel, 1999; Mechanic et al., 2000; Pathe' & Mullen, 1997). Services for victims of stalking have been proposed (Dziegielewski & Roberts, 1995; Meloy, 1997; Roberts & Dziegielewski, 1996) and the need for services has been demonstrated (Littel, 1999; Spence-Diehl & Potocky-Tripodi, 2001). Thus far, this body of literature supports the development of interventions designed to assist victims and curb stalking behaviors.

## **Research Background Questions**

The Design and Development model (Rothman & Thomas, 1994) provides a framework to design, develop, implement, evaluate and disseminate new social service programs. This model was used to develop a community-based case management program designed specifically for victims of stalking. This study was conducted while the project was in the early development and pilot-testing phase of the Design and Development framework. During this phase, evaluation is on-going and is used to examine the process of service delivery, revise program components, and ultimately work towards

proceduralizing those components that appear to be producing effective results. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are utilized, however, an emphasis is placed on qualitative-naturalistic inquiry (Patton, 1990). The evaluative activities of this phase are conceptualized as being in preparation for the experimental designs and standardized outcome measures employed in the next phase of Design and Development. In this study, nine research questions were selected to holistically examine the processes and outcomes associated with program implementation. Table 1 lists these questions and shows their linkages to data, data reduction techniques and methods of analysis.

Table 1: Measurement of Research Questions by Data Source, Reduction & Analysis

Research Question	Data Source	Data Reduction	Method of Analysis
1. How are services provided to Project IMPACT clients?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case Activity Log</li> <li>Victim Interviews</li> <li>Victim Advocate Interviews</li> <li>Participant Observation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case Study</li> <li>Open, Axial and Selective Coding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content Analysis</li> </ul>
2. What services are provided to Project IMPACT clients?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case Activity Log</li> <li>Needs Assessment</li> <li>Goal Setting/Intervention Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service Provision Spreadsheet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Descriptive Statistics</li> </ul>
3. What types of interactions exist between victim advocates and their clients?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case Activity Log</li> <li>Victim Interviews</li> <li>Victim Advocate Interviews</li> <li>Participant Observation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case Study</li> <li>Open, Axial &amp; Selective Coding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content Analysis</li> <li>Descriptive Statistics</li> </ul>
4. What types of interactions exist between victim advocates and community members?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case Activity Logs</li> <li>Goal Setting/Intervention Plan</li> <li>Victim Advocate Interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case Study</li> <li>Open, Axial &amp; Selective Coding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content Analysis</li> <li>Descriptive Statistics</li> </ul>
5. What aspects of the service delivery process can be standardized and/or proceduralized?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case Activity Logs</li> <li>Needs Assessment</li> <li>Stalking Intake</li> <li>Victim Interviews</li> <li>Victim Advocate Interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case Study</li> <li>Open, Axial &amp; Selective Coding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content Analysis</li> </ul>
6. What aspects of the service delivery process vary as a result of client or situational factors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case Activity Log</li> <li>Goal Setting/Intervention Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case Study</li> <li>Open, Axial &amp; Selective Coding</li> <li>Service Provision Spreadsheet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content Analysis</li> <li>Chi-Square Analysis</li> <li>Spearman's Rho</li> <li>Cramer's V</li> </ul>
7. Does Project IMPACT improve the safety and security of stalking victims?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stalking Chronological Log</li> <li>Victim Interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case Study</li> <li>Open, Axial &amp; Selective Coding</li> <li>Client Spreadsheet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content Analysis</li> <li>McNemar test</li> <li>Phi</li> </ul>
8. Does Project IMPACT improve the wellbeing of stalking victims?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Victim Interviews</li> <li>Impact of Event Scale</li> <li>Goal Setting/Intervention Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goal Attainment Spreadsheet</li> <li>Case Study</li> <li>Client Spreadsheet</li> <li>Open, Axial &amp; Selective Coding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content Analysis</li> <li>Wilcoxon's Matched Pairs Signed Rank Test</li> <li>Chi-Square Analysis</li> </ul>
9. Do Project IMPACT advocates succeed in brokering and coordinating services for stalking victims through boundary spanning activities in the multi-agency service delivery network?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case Activity Logs</li> <li>Goal Setting/Intervention Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goal Attainment Spread Sheet</li> <li>Case Study</li> <li>Open, Axial, &amp; Selective Coding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content Analysis</li> <li>Chi-Square Analysis</li> <li>Spearman's Rho</li> </ul>

## Methodology

The sample included all 36 clients who participated in the project between February of 2000 and June of 2001, as well as the 10 victim advocates who provided them with services. The majority of clients were females whose stalkers were ex-intimates. Quantitative and qualitative data were drawn from client case files (intake, needs assessment, goal setting, case activity logs, stalking behavior chronology), pre/during/post administrations of the Impact of Event Scale (Horowitz, Wilner & Alvarez, 1979), participant observation field notes and interview transcriptions. The lack of controls involved with agency-based research commonly results in the incomplete collection of data from all subjects. Table 2 shows the extent to which various types of data were collected from this sample.

**Table 2: Data sources obtained from subjects**

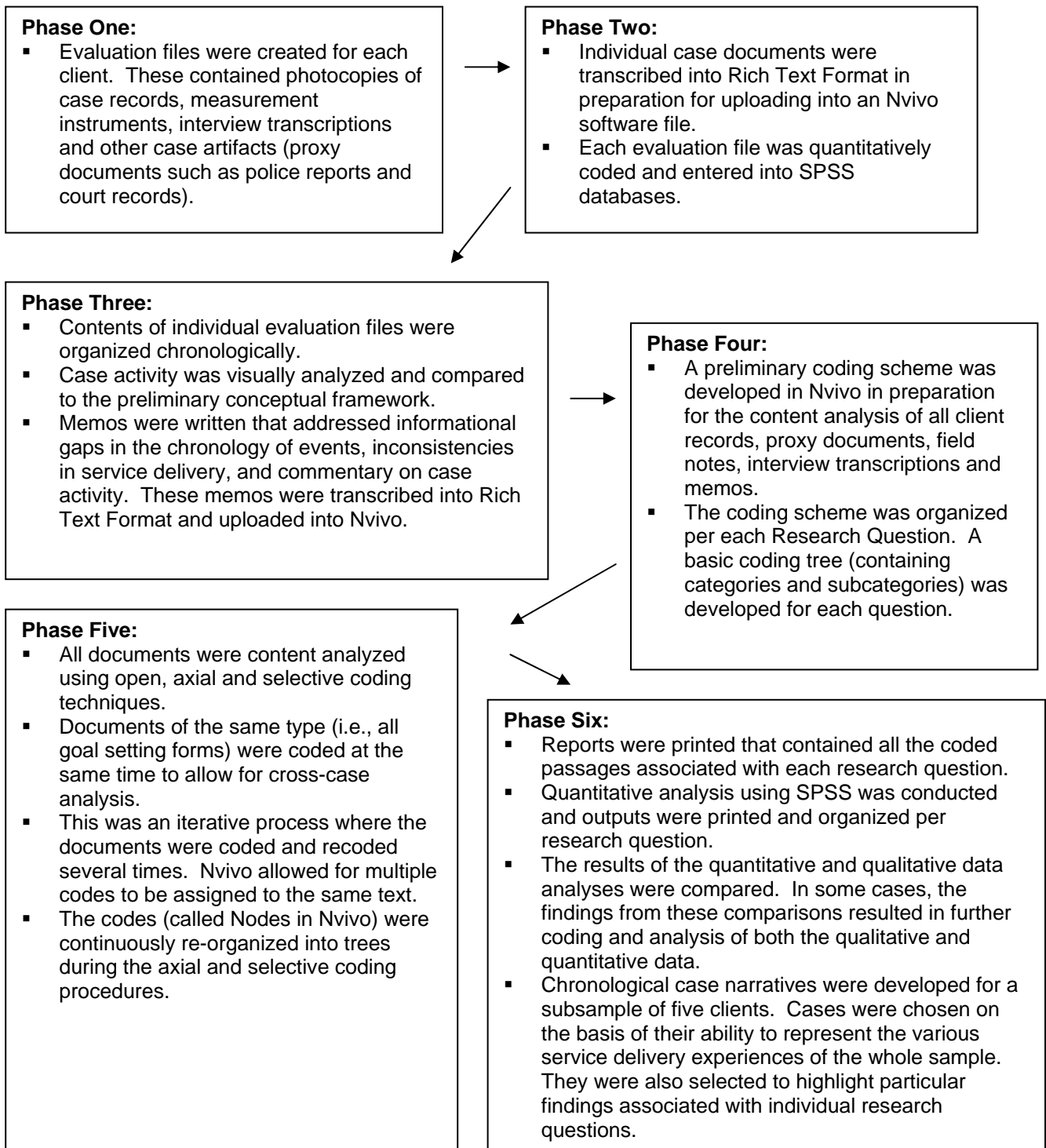
Data Source	Complete	Partial	Not Administered	Total
Intake (Demographics, Experience of Stalking Behaviors)	28	8	0	36
Needs Assessment/Goal Setting	24	11	1	36
Stalker Background	27	9	0	36
Chronological History	26	10	0	36
Impact of Event Scale I	21	0	15	36
Impact of Event Scale II	11	0	25	36
Follow-up Interview	12	1	23	36
Advocate Interview	4*	0	6	10

\* These advocates provided the majority (57%) of services to clients.

Quantitative data were entered into three databases where: (1) clients were the units of analysis (n=36), (2) services were the units of analysis (n=1146), and (3) goals were the units of analysis (n=149). These data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's Chi-square, Spearman's Rho, Phi, Cramer's V, Wilcoxon's Matched Pairs Signed-Ranked Test and McNemar's Test Statistic. Statistical findings with medium or large effect sizes (.30 or higher) were considered substantively significant.

Qualitative data were reduced via open, axial and selective coding methods. Grounded theory and case study frameworks were utilized to analyze these data. The triangulation of multiple data sources and methods of analysis was an iterative process. Figure 1 shows a schema of the six key phases associated with data management and analysis.

Figure 1: Data Management and Analysis Process



## Results

Results showed that most clients noted an improved sense of well-being and safety, though residual symptoms of trauma remained for numerous individuals. Analysis of the Impact of Event Scale scores found no significant differences between pre and post test measures ( $n=11$ ). In several cases ( $n=7$ ), one subscale increased while the other decreased. Qualitative analysis showed that these patterns were generally linked to continued stalking behaviors and/or court cases where the intrusion subscale increased and the avoidance subscale decreased. The opposite was true for those who were no longer being stalked nor involved with the courts.

Stalkers appeared to respond to criminal and civil justice-based interventions by reducing violent and threatening behaviors; however, covert behaviors continued. The presence or absence of 10 types of stalking behaviors were assessed at pre and post intervals and Phi was used to evaluate the strength of these differences. Statistically significant reductions were observed in unwanted communication, unwanted face-to-face contact, surveillance, unwanted objects, following, threats, and violence. Due to the small sample size, only unwanted communication and unwanted face-to-face contact were substantively significant ( $\Phi > .3$ ). Covert behaviors such as information gathering and 3<sup>rd</sup> party/institutional harassment continued for numerous clients. Qualitative data showed several ways that stalkers used "pseudo-legitimate" means to harass their victims, including filing civil law suits, repeatedly scheduling court hearings to make minor adjustments in child custody and divorce agreements, and gathering information from 3<sup>rd</sup> parties (employers, family, etc...) to gain knowledge of the victim's whereabouts and activities.

The study produced findings that provide preliminary support for the use of several intervention components including support services, psycho-education, safety planning, and boundary spanning. The psycho-education and safety planning in particular seemed to help clients cognitively reframe their perceptions of the stalking experience and gain a sense of increased safety and well-being.

Clients and their advocates mutually set 149 goals, 124 of which were assessed for their level of achievement. The remainder were excluded due to being in process or no longer desired by the clients. A 67% level of satisfactory goal achievement was observed overall, though goals involving legal issues ( $r = -.32$ ,  $p=.000$ ,  $n=124$ ) and actions targeted towards justice-based organizations ( $r = -.28$ ,  $p=.005$ ,  $n=99$ ) were associated with lower achievement. Qualitative data offered further details of inconsistencies in the enforcement of protective orders and state statutes. The majority of clients' goals addressed legal (31%), financial ( $n=37$ ) and safety-related ( $n=31$ ) concerns.

High service usage was related to low-income clients ( $r = .389$ ,  $p<.05$ ,  $n=35$ ) and those lacking in social support ( $r = .526$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $n=35$ ). It was also linked to stalkers' following ( $r=.436$ ,  $p<.05$ ,  $n=35$ ) and surveillance behaviors ( $r = .419$ ,  $p<.05$ ,  $n=35$ ). This is likely due to victims' inability to effectively remove themselves from their stalkers' spheres of activity (i.e., they couldn't afford to leave the neighborhood or change

jobs). Qualitative data revealed numerous cases where these clients became trapped in a downward spiral and one problem led to another. This cycle would have likely been reversed had the clients been able to access tangible supports and adequate financial resources.

Approximately one-third of the clients withdrew from services following the intake or brief service usage. Two of the clients located for follow-up interviews attributed their withdrawal to the apparent inexperience of their advocates and one stated that she wasn't made aware of how the project could help her. All three requested to be re-engaged in service delivery following their interviews. Quantitative data analysis showed that service withdrawal increased for African-American clients ( $\rho_r = .599, p < .001, n = 35$ ) and for those whose needs assessments were not fully completed ( $\rho_r = -.518, p < .001, n = 35$ ). It is not clear whether cultural incongruities influenced this phenomena since the African-American clients were served by advocates representing multiple backgrounds (Hispanic, African-American and non-Hispanic White). However, several qualitative passages allowed for minimal speculation that inaccurate assumptions were made about the clients' intentions and desired service outcomes.

Numerous inconsistencies in program implementation were found to be associated with the skills and experiences of victim advocates. These inconsistencies also appeared to be related to changes in personnel coverage resulting from funding instability. It seemed that regardless of previous social work experiences, advocates needed two-three months of supervision to learn the program model and implement its components. There was also evidence that to provide effective services (as measured by goal attainment and client satisfaction), advocates needed to achieve a balance between micro (counseling, personal assessment and emotional support) and macro skills (boundary spanning, collaboration and system assessment). The macro skills were particularly important for the multi-disciplinary case review meetings that were held 27 times during the evaluation period.

## Utility for Social Work Practice

The data holds preliminary implications for social work practice and policy since the generalizability of the data is limited. Even though many recommendations are specific to the evaluated program, others may find them relevant given the lack of published research in this area. To promote service usage by non-intimate partner victims of stalking and male victims, it is recommended that outreach methods be expanded to include large-scale media campaigns. Inconsistencies in client needs assessments may be minimized through use of close-ended questions, check-lists and standardized measures. Key areas that should be assessed with standardized instruments include social support, trauma symptomology, financial stability and locus of control. These assessments should be conducted by experienced social workers with expertise in stalking victimization and community service delivery networks.

To improve service delivery in general, the hiring, training and supervision of social workers should emphasize a balance between micro and macro practice skills,

particularly those involving crisis counseling and boundary spanning. Since financial stability and social support seemed to play key roles in buffering clients against trauma and intrusive stalking behaviors, service delivery should emphasize the bolstering of these protective factors. As a corollary, social workers' training curricula should include segments on financial management, planning, and job skills development.

The complexity of stalking warrants the need for interagency collaboration, yet client confidentiality and organizational structural differences present challenges and barriers to open communication. Thus it is recommended that further developmental work be devoted to establishing a systematic and client-centered method of conducting multi-disciplinary case review meetings.

Research partnerships between social workers and criminal justice specialists should be established to examine the following phenomena: a) the continuance of covert stalking behaviors after criminal justice measures have been utilized, b) differential enforcement practices of anti-stalking statutes and protective orders among police and judicial personnel, and c) differential treatment of stalking victimization by domestic violence and family court systems.

Several policy implications have also been identified. Stalking training should be developed for all criminal justice and family court personnel. Additionally, the data support a previous recommendation by Tjaden & Thoennes (1998), that States should eliminate "credible threat" requirements from anti-stalking statutory language. Crimes Compensation programmatic guidelines should be examined on a state-by-state basis to ensure that stalking victims are eligible for lost wages compensation and reimbursement for mental health counseling. Finally, it was noted that disruptions in program funding and personnel coverage were detrimental to the service delivery and evaluation process. As such, the last recommendation is for funding agencies to provide multi-year funding for pilot-projects and higher-than-average staff salaries to promote retention of qualified personnel and consistency in program implementation.

The Design and Development framework proved to be a useful guide for evaluating the processes and outcomes of the early development and pilot testing of a case management intervention with victims of stalking. Using a mixed-method design, the study was able to identify implementation problems, design flaws, "key ingredients," and areas where proceduralization is feasible. It was particularly useful in identifying the differential influences of the program design versus factors associated with program implementation. As such, a feedback loop has been established to help refine the design, minimize implementation problems and prepare the project for more rigorous testing.

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